

Text Amendment TA20-0002 – Adjusted Minimum Height

6/3/2020

Introduction

Amendment TA20-0002 proposes adding an entirely new Division to Article 5 of the Development Code, “Division 5.7., Adjusted Minimum Height.” The proposed new Division would attempt to act as a tool that would assist in the implementation of The Next Ten Comprehensive Plan by providing developers the opportunity and incentive to think more creatively and incrementally, encouraging competition and redevelopment on typically (but not exclusively) larger and older development sites within certain districts in the Perimeter Center Character Area.

Much of Perimeter Center is sprinkled with high-rise office parks of the 1980’s and 90’s, where towers soar above otherwise mostly wooded or parking lot landscapes. As the areas around these campuses have thrived and continued to develop, acres of very suitable land, if not prime property are often underutilized or overlooked, possibly considered established or inflexible, even pertaining to the code that governs them. These “forgotten areas” around anchor high-rises, it is staff’s opinion, might well be prime locations for infill development or redevelopment, as well as the currently allowed, development high-rises.

However, staff and the City at large (according to The Next Ten) would like to avoid seeing two (2) story developments cover the landscape of Sandy Spring’s most intense zoning districts (PX- 8 through 20/35 and PM- 8 through 20/35). To do this, staff proposes some controls or conditions to allow for adjusted minimum building height in these zoning districts, so as to mostly maintain the integrity of the minimum height requirements in place (minimum 4 stories for PX- or PM- 8 and 6 for PX- or PM- 10/12 and greater).

Below is the context to the proposal that will help explain the vision for the text amendment:

Structure Change Report:

ARTICLE 5. - PERIMETER CENTER

- Div. 5.1. - District Intent Statements
- Div. 5.2. - Perimeter Residential (PR-)
- Div. 5.3 - Perimeter Mixed Use ,
Low/Mid-Rise (PX-)
- Div. 5.4. - Perimeter Mixed Use/High-
Rise (PX-)
- Div. 5.5. - Perimeter Medical (PM-)
- Div. 5.6. - Perimeter Center Frontages
- > **Div. 5.7. – Adjusted Minimum Height**

^This new division would apply to any PX- or PM- district that allows more than 5 stories of building height.

Content Change Report:

Section 5.7.1. Clarifies the applicability-

[Sec. 5.7.1. - Applicability](#)

The Perimeter Center Adjusted Minimum Height requirements act like an overlay that modifies standards in the following Perimeter Center Zoning Districts: Perimeter Mixed Use (PX-8, -12, -10/12, -20/35) and Perimeter Medical (PM-8, -12/15, -20/35). If any Perimeter Center Adjusted Minimum Height requirement is in conflict with the underlying zoning district, the Perimeter Center Adjusted Minimum Height requirements govern.

Section 5.7.2, “Standards” is broken into two components; the first of which is the commercial or mixed use component (Sec. 5.7.2.1.a.)-

- a. Mixed-use building (a minimum of two (2) stories), provided:
 - i. The proposed building square footage is less than 10% of the overall total building square footage of the development of contiguous lots, as described in Sec. 6.1.1.A.3.
 - ii. Any uses in the first two (2) stories of the building must be personal service, office, restaurant, or retail uses.
 - iii. Retail, restaurant, or personal service uses must be reasonably located within the development so as to be accessible to the general public.

This would require the applicant to have a preliminary plan on file for reference and to be able to determine total building square footage of the site. Where does the development site end and begin. When this is determined, the developer could conceive of a mix of uses where the first couple of floors would need to be the types of uses that encourage foot traffic. Guidance is given as to the importance of location in terms of access to the general public and not only office-goers or tenants.

The other component is the single unit residential component (single unit attached and detached in Sec. 5.7.2.1.b.)-

- b. Single unit attached or single unit detached residence (a minimum of two (2) stories), intended for home ownership, provided:
 - i. The total parcel area devoted to single unit residential uses shall be no more than 20% of the total area of contiguous lots, as described in Sec. 6.1.1.A.3.
 - ii. An equivalent area of permitted commercial uses shall be constructed prior to the issuance of permits for residential uses.
 - iii. A parking study must be performed to determine if opportunities exist for shared parking to reduce the overall number of parking spaces.

The connection here is that in order to develop the residential component at all, an equal amount of building square footage of the commercial component would need to be developed first. Commercial is based on existing building square footage; residential is based on total site acreage. A requirement for parking studies looking to reduce parking needed and ultimately to encourage shared parking ensure that the integrity of the

applicable “parking maximum” requirement for the district is upheld. Additionally, in the parking calculations table, Sec. 8.1.3, “Perimeter Center/City Springs Districts” staff has proposed the requirement for max parking be based on unit rather than bedroom, to help encourage less car travel. At a clip of 2.4 per unit however, the calculation recognizes the transitional nature of the overall district.

B. The following maximum parking table applies in the Perimeter Center and City Springs Districts.

Maximum Parking Table	Vehicle Parking (max)	Short-Term Bike Parking (min)	Long-Term Bike Parking (min)
Residential Uses			
Single unit	2.4 spaces per unit		

Lastly with Sec. 5.7.2., there is Section 2., “Additional Use Standards.” The only standard in this section would require an “Urban General” frontage, which would help ensure any preliminary plan would have thoughtful urban design involved in the inner, if not surrounding street network. This frontage requires a build-to zone and certain human-scale standards not always required in every district.

2. Additional Use Standards

- a. Urban General (-UG) frontage requirements apply where streets are internal, whether private or public, when no Perimeter Center Frontage is otherwise required.

References are made to Division 5.7. in Division 5.3., 5.4., and 5.5, in their respective sections on “Height and Mass.” References are also proposed in Division 7.3. for the residential component with single unit detached and attached.

An error in the use table was also corrected, as the current code showed single unit detached as permitted in PX- and PM- districts. It is not as of this report, but as proposed in this report, would be considered permitted as a Limited-use.

Use Category:	R	R	P	CO	R	R	R	R	ON	OX	CX	SX	TX	CS	IX	CC	PR	PX	PM	Definition
Single unit detached	P	P	—	—	P	P	L	—	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	PL	PL	Sec. 7.3.1.B

Public Hearings

Planning Commission: June 17, 2020

Mayor and Council: July 21, 2020

Public Comments

Comments and suggestions are welcome. They can be submitted via email at pz@sandyspringsga.gov.